Department of Agriculture & Cooperation up to the end of October 2005, the area sown during the kharif season this year under foodgrains and commercial crops in 101.61 million hectares as compared to 100.43 million hectares cultivated during the corresponding period last year. This shows an increased coverage of 1.2 million hectares in the Kharif season this year over the corresponding period last year.

Loss of land fertility

1059. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any study has been undertaken to analyse and determine the loss caused to the fertility of land due to prolonged use of chemical/ inorganic fertilizers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have any proposal for the promotion of organic farming;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) There is no evidence to suggest about loss caused to the fertility of land due to prolonged use of chemicals/inorganic fertilizers. However, investigation under All India Coordinated Research Project under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) on 'Long Term Fertilizer Experiments' over few decades have revealed that prolonged imbalanced use of chemical fertilizers and non application of organic manures affected soil health and crop productivity by causing deficiencies of secondary and micro nutrients. The average consumption of fertilizers in the country is 89.83 kg/ha during 2003-04. This level of consumption is not considered to have any ill effect on the fertility of the land. The ICAR is recommending soil test based Integrated Nutrient Management practices to avoid loss of fertility. Besides, Govt. is also promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) which includes soil test based balanced and judicious use of chemical fertilizers in conjunction with organic fertilizers like Farm Yard Manure, green manure, compost, vermicompost and biofertilizers etc. for sustaining soil health and its productivity.

(c) to (e) To promote organic farming in the Country, Govt. of india has launched

(i) National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) in April 2000 for promotion of organic export.

(ii) National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF) in October 2004 with following objectives:

- Putting in place a system of certification of organic produce;
- Capacity building through service providers;
- Financial support for commercial production units for production of organic inputs through back ended capital subsidy
  - fruits and vegetable compost units
  - bio-fertilizers units
  - vermi-culture hatcheries
- Market development, promotion, extension and training on organic farming.

Assistance to Punjab for upgradation of semen banks

1060. SHRI DHARAM PAL SABHARWAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Punjab Government has asked the Central Government for more funds for upgrading semen banks to ISO certification for buffalo breeding of Murrah and Mili Ravi breeds; and

(b) if so, whether the amount has been sanctioned and if not, at what stage the proposal is under consideration of Government?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The proposal received from the State Government for upgrading semen stations has been considered under National Project for Cattle and Buffalo Breeding. Micro-plan of Punjab for 05-06 has been approved for Rs. 1165.59 lakh which includes Rs. 540.70 lakh for modernization and strengthening of semen stations, out of this an amount of Rs. 300.00 lakh has already been released to the State as first instalment.

National Horticulture Mission

1061. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state: